

THE
Importance of Religion
CONSIDERED, 1182d

AND THE RELATIVE DUTIES IT
INCULCATES.

WITH
*Meditations, Occasional Prayers, and
Hymns.*

DESIGNED FOR THE
INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH.

RELIGION is the divine science of true wisdom.

Mrs. TRIMMER.

If RELIGION is neglected, we pass through *life* destitute
of the surest guide, and through *death* destitute of all
consolation.

Lord KAIMS.

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Importance of Religion
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THE
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CHAP. I.

“**W**HAT is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—Matt. xvi. 26. These words of our blessed Saviour apply

to all cases where there is any competition between our temporal and eternal concerns.

To “gain the whole world,” signifies to gain all the means of happiness which this world can afford; the most unbounded command of riches and pleasures; whatever earth can give, or human nature can enjoy.

By the “loss of the soul,” is meant the loss of life and happiness, and an exposure to the miseries of eternal punishment. Our Saviour does not here examine into the nature of the soul, or how much an immortal spirit excels the whole material world; but he uses
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a more sensible argument to make men good, since it is the same soul which must feel the happiness or miseries of this world, and of the next. And therefore, when he compares the gain of the world with the loss of the soul, he sets the happiness of this world against the miseries of the next; he opposes all those enjoyments which we are capable of feeling here, to those unknown miseries which are to be the penalty of sin hereafter.

When our Saviour therefore proposes by way of question, "What is a man profited, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—he appeals to every man

to judge for himself, whether all the happiness of this world can recompense the loss of the next; whether it is not better to forego the short and sinful pleasures of this life, than to be miserable for ever.

This indeed most men are ready to allow; though few have the resolution to practise. Around us, we every where behold a busy throng. Restless, and uneasy in their present situations, they are anxiously employed in procuring a change; and as soon as their wish is fulfilled, they are as dissatisfied as they were before. The man of business longs for leisure; and the
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leisure for which he had longed, proves irksome. The man of retirement fancies no state so happy as that of active life; but the tumult of the world makes him look back with regret on the calm hours of his former quiet. Beauty, wit, riches and honours, are eagerly desired by persons in every rank of life. They are the parent's fondest wish for his child; the ambition of the young, and the admiration of the aged; and yet, in what numberless instances have they proved to those who possessed them, no better than shining snares, and sources of lasting misery! Long life is the most general, and seem-

ingly the most innocent object of desire. But in respect to this also we so frequently err, that it would have been a blessing to many to have had their wish denied. For, as the learned and pious Erasmus has observed, When we pray to God to spare our lives, without ever intending to amend them; what is it but desiring that we may be indulged in an opportunity to sin as long as possible? When we pray for riches, and know not how to use them; or for health, with an intention to abuse it—are not our prayers presumptuous, and our devotion impious? We ought rather to pray for a *better mind*, and
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leave it to God whether we shall be long-lived or prosperous: being anxious only with St. Paul, that “whether we live or die, we may live and die in the Lord.”

When our Saviour compares the gain of the world with the loss of our souls, he can mean no other than such a *gain* as will *forfeit* our souls. A good man may be rich and honourable; he may enjoy all the lawful pleasures of this life as much as it becomes a man to enjoy them; he may enjoy them as much as God made them to be enjoyed, and therefore may be as happy as this world was intended to make him. This remark is proper to be made,

made, in order to prevent any unjust prejudices against the divine commands, as if we could not save our souls without renouncing all the pleasures and social comforts of this life, and live the life of a hermit; whereas, by observing the laws of virtue and the rules of moderation, we may enjoy all the happiness this world was made for, and all the happiness which we were made to enjoy in this world; and yet go to heaven when we die. For without railing against the world, which is God's work, or the innocent enjoyments of it, which are fitted by our bountiful Creator to answer all the purposes of
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of human nature; it is a vain thing to persuade a man who is easy and prosperous, that this world is not a pleasant place; or that there is no difference between a prince and a peasant, between riches and poverty, between pain and pleasure; since this would be to persuade men out of their senses, as all feel such a difference very sensibly. Our Saviour's argument consists only in a comparison between the world and our souls, which does not imply that the gain of this world's advantages is in itself worthless, but only that the loss of the soul is infinitely more important to us. For though we should suppose a
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man to have the empire of the whole world, to have all the delights of nature at his command, and to have his fortune in his own keeping; all this could be his, but for a season; and would profit nothing, should he lose his soul after all these enjoyments were at an end: for who would consent to be this happy man, upon condition of being miserable for ever? Let us value the world then as highly as we please, admire its splendours, and partake of its pleasures, so we will but remember at the same time, that to lose our souls is too dear a purchase for them. The only gain of this world, which
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comes in competition with our souls, is a *sinful gain*; what we cannot possess, or cannot enjoy, without offending God. Nothing but a sinful gain of this world can hurt us; sinful riches, sinful honours, and sinful pleasures: for this is the scripture notion of *world*, when we are commanded “not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world;” or, as St. John expresses himself, “all that is in the world; the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life.” These lusts are called “all that is in the world,” because bad men make no other use of the good things of this world, but to gratify their
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their lusts, their luxury, their avarice, or their pride. And this only is that portion of the world which we must not love, and the gain of which will destroy our souls.

Hence, we are enabled to make a just estimate of what this gain of the world is, for which so many men lose their souls. And we shall find that whatever new degrees of riches, or honours, or pleasures, men gain by dishonest or improper means, above what they could have got, had they lived "soberly, righteously, and godly," this is their gain, this is the reward of their sin, and the price of their souls. As some sinners gain very little,

little, and others gain more of this world by their sins; so some have less, others have more of this world in exchange for their souls: but none can gain more than the present rewards and pleasures of sin, which are very often so dearly paid for in this life, that a good man need not envy even their temporal gain.

It is no hard matter indeed to *prove*, though it be not easy to persuade bad men of it, that the sincere and uniform practice of piety and virtue makes a man much happier in this life than all sinful pleasures possibly can do: for a virtuous man has secret enjoyments

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which bad men know nothing of, and is exempt from many of their troubles and cares.

The difference between riches and poverty is most visible among good men themselves: "for wisdom is good with an inheritance." A good man who has a plentiful fortune, is in more happy circumstances for this world than a good man who is poor and oppressed. But a virtuous poor man is much happier in this world than the greatest and most powerful sinner. This reflection may seem not to affect bad men, because they do not feel what good men enjoy. But they can easily imagine, that for a
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man to be at peace with his own conscience, to have calm and moderate passions, to be contented with his station in life, whether high or low, to live in submission to God, and in entire dependance on his providence, with the heavenly hope of an immortal life hereafter—these are very different kinds of pleasure to what bad man feel, who lose more than can be gained in this life, when they forfeit the comforts of virtue and the consolations of religion.

Let us only reflect upon the visible rewards of sinfulness in this world, and then we may compute its gains.

All finners, who have not finned away the sense of virtue, and the very belief of a future state, gain shame and fear, and a guilty remorse which embitters all their lonely hours with the dreadful expectations of present or future vengeance.

Ill-gotten riches, or undeserved honours, make them pointed at by the finger of scorn; and they many times see themselves blown up like a bubble, and burst as suddenly too.

Other finners gain a halter, or banishment from their native country, or imprisonment in it, with languishing diseases, rottenness in their bones, or racking pains, which

which shorten their lives, or make their existence miserable.

And those who gain most, lead a life of brutish sensuality, which it is impossible should give true happiness to a being, who has a diviner principle in him, and was formed for holier pursuits.

SUITABLE EJACULATIONS.

O Almighty Lord! mortify and subdue all vices in me: and so strengthen me with thy grace, that by the purity of my life and the constancy of my faith, I may prove

myself a true disciple of my blessed Saviour.

Grant me true innocency of heart, that my members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, I may in all things obey thy heavenly will. Deliver me from the occasions of sin, and from the importunities of such as delight in folly. Guard me from the snares of enticing company, and from the dangerous infection of bad examples.

Preserve me chaste and spotless, and undefiled; that my body may be an holy temple, and my soul a fit sanctuary for thee to dwell in.

Grant that I may have power and
strength

strength to obtain victory, and to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Imprint on my mind this important truth; that the pleasures of sin are short and momentary; but the pain and torment, eternal: and that the best which can follow, is a bitter repentance.

Pardon all my past impurities, in thought, word, and deed: and give me grace to fly all incitements to evil, that I may bring my body into subjection to the commandments of thee, O Most High; and by the influence of thy Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love and worthily magnify thy holy name.

Create

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; and suffer not my frailties to become habitual, lest I die impenitent, and perish everlastingly.

O thou great Physician of souls, cure me of all the mortal maladies which proceed from unholy desires; that, being outwardly and inwardly fortified by the assistance of thy grace, I may press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHAP. II.

NO man could ever yet find a complete satisfaction in the enjoyments of sense. Solomon had made as many experiments of this nature as ever man did; and yet, after all, he exclaimed, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” This perhaps, to some persons, may seem to reflect upon the wisdom and goodness of God in making the world; that all things in it are so vain and empty. But indeed God has made all things good and useful to the ends and purposes for which he made them. We ourselves make
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the world *vain*, by abusing its benefits; we make it *vain*, by making it a world of lusts, and by expecting happiness from an unlawful gratification of those lusts. The natural world is sufficient to answer all the purposes for which God made it; to supply all the wants of nature, and to make our lives easy and comfortable in the practice of virtue; and while we use the world to these purposes, we shall find no vanity, no vexation in it. Hence, the cure which the wise man prescribes for the vanity of the world is, "to fear God, and to keep his commandments:" that is, to confine our enjoyments with-
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in the bounds and limits of the divine laws; for this unites the pleasures of reason and religion with the enjoyments of sense. When our appetites are governed by reason and religion, they will be easily satisfied; when they exceed these bounds, nothing will content them.

By indulging unlawful excesses, we make conscience our enemy. We create causes of lasting unhappiness: we “lead ourselves into temptation.” We seek for occasions to complain; and are found to multiply the troubles of life by those very means which were intended by Providence to remove them.

them. "There should be a time for every purpose under heaven." But we give up higher considerations to the indulgence of the passions only. The pleasures of this world become too often the sole objects of our attention and our wishes. They engross all our thoughts. They are not merely the *amusement*, but they are made the *business* of life. The "fear of God" is not before our eyes. We drown ourselves in a gulf of sensuality, in which, if reason be not lost, religion is soon swallowed up; and with it, all the noblest delights that can enter into the heart of man. The health im-
paired,

paired, the reputation hurt, the time and substance trifled away, are the daily and hourly sacrifices to this ungovernable temper. Surrounded as we are by shallow jesters and profane wits, who affect to ridicule every thing that is grave and serious; few, even of those who are well-disposed, can find sufficient opportunities to lament the errors of their ways! But, alas! how few are even found to seek after such opportunities. We are so far from lamenting our errors, that we acknowledge none to be lamented. We see not our own peculiar failings. "The sin that so easily besets us;" that is, the
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favourite and ruling vice, of whatever kind it be, is the last thing which we perceive; visible as it is to the eye of every human creature except ourselves. The serious advice therefore, or the remonstrance of a friend, is found to be an offensive flaw in his character. It is considered either as an instance of a severe, or an argument of an unsocial temper. In the present refined age, even a *parent* is sometimes induced to abstain from such a liberty. The youth whose vain opinion and self-conceit leads him to disdain counsel, naturally makes it unwelcome: he interprets the earnest admonitions of an affectionate

tionate father into expressions of harshness and ill-will: he proportions his resentment to the opinion of the injury he sustains, determines from that moment to treat the rebukes of a parent as he would the reproaches of an enemy, and returns " railing for railing."— Instead of *reforming* his errors, he *defends* them, and reproves his teacher in his turn. Such an instance presents us with a melancholy specimen of human depravity and filial ingratitude. Yet thus do we suffer prejudices and passions to prevail over all our natural feelings and acquired understanding. With abundant industry

we provide materials for the indulgence of the senses, but take small pains for the improvement of our minds, for the increase of our faith, or the security of our virtue. If serious and devout reflection was more frequently encouraged, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit implored; it might protect the integrity of the upright, and assist the reformation of the sinner. It might prevail with “the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” It might induce the unmerciful to become forgiving and humane; the voluptuous to part with their excesses; the dishonest

honest and the crafty with their artifices: to the envious it might give a submissive quiet mind, and teach the proud humility. Of the many who are engaged in vicious pursuits, *some* will certainly be found, who are not abandoned to all hopes of amendment: and these may greatly profit by reflecting on their sins. Retired from the vanities of the world, they are enabled to judge of them more justly, and to see that even the innocent pleasures of life, much more the lawless and profane, disappoint expectation continually. Look into the secret chambers of the voluptuous and the thoughtless, and ask if they

were ever found to enjoy the felicity they expected to find? Too severely will they have proved from experience, that under the disguise of pleasure they have pursued real sorrow and remorse. Like the unhappy lunatic, they have mistaken a broken reed for a golden sceptre. They are disappointed in every object of their wishes. "Their silver is become dross." They have given their "money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not."

Every man who is capable of reflection, must, at some period of his life, be sensible of the want of it. The truth is, and it may be wise to discover

discover it, we *dare not* reflect. It is intolerable pain to remember those things, whereof our "conscience is afraid." As St. Paul "reasoned of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." Art, ingenuity, and an air of virtue, cover a multitude of imperfections from the eye of human observation, but conscience discovers the very truth. There needs no severer witness to testify against that unhappy man who hath on his own heart his accusation written. The miserable wounded spirit is apt to fly from that serious and devout reflection, which alone could bring any effectual

tual relief to its uneasiness, as the sick are apt to disrelish those very things which, in the opinion of the skilful, might contribute most to their recovery. Men naturally wish to be at a distance from those whose just demands they cannot satisfy, and are from the same principle but ill disposed to look carefully into those scenes of life, which they are ashamed ever to have been concerned in. To a vicious mind any vanity is acceptable which may but prevent, with a moment's interruption, the thought of its own misery and dishonour.

Men venture their souls to taste some of the pleasures of sin, and when

when they have once begun to venture, they commonly venture on till they lose them; which has been the lamentable case of so many thousands, that it should make all men, who have any care for their souls, aware of the cheat. For if the whole world, as we have seen, cannot recompense the loss of the soul; no wise man ought to put his soul into a state of danger for the whole world; that is, he ought not to commit the smallest known sin, for the greatest temporal advantages which may lose his soul. What we call the gain of the world, is, in truth, to spoil the world itself, to make its enjoyments uneasy, dangerous,

dangerous, and inconstant. This all bad men find, who are never satisfied long together with what they have: they think other men happy, but not themselves, which is generally the condition of the most prosperous sinners, who are happier in other men's opinions than their own. But still they pursue an opinion of happiness, and climb as fast as they can up the hill, when they think they can reach the heavens with their hands; and when they are got thither, they only find themselves the more exposed to storms; while the heavens, and the happiness they expected, are as far off as ever.

Heaven

Heaven is represented in scripture by some earthly comparisons, by a kingdom, and an immortal crown of glory. It is, to see God, and to dwell for ever in his presence. It is light, and life, and joy, rivers of pleasures, and fulness of joy. These are the greatest and best things we know in this world, and these serve only for some faint images of the happiness of heaven. And must not the loss of heaven therefore be much greater than all the gain of this world? Bad men, indeed, have no sense of this loss now; they think they could bear the loss of heaven, could they but escape hell; and therefore they try
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to persuade themselves that all which is said of the punishments of bad men in the next world is only this punishment of loss: and they value heaven so little now, they think they shall value it as little hereafter.

The reason why bad men despise heaven now is, either because they do not wish to believe that there is such a place, or know not what the happiness of it is. But this will be no reason when they shall see heaven, and behold the glories of it: when they shall see good men “ shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father;” when they shall see them “ come from
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from the east, and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God," and they themselves shut out. Such a sight of heaven would for ever eclipse all the vain glories of this world; and when men come to see how great a happiness they have lost, the pain of losing it must be proportioned to the greatness of the loss: and that is now as inconceivable to us as the happiness of heaven is. We always find in this world, that the trouble of losing bears proportion to the pleasure of gaining; and it is probable therefore, that the torments and agonies of mind for losing

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heaven,

heaven, will be as great as the joy and triumph of gaining it.

Heaven is the only state of happiness in the next world, and that must necessarily make those who fail to obtain it, very sensible of their loss. In this world bad men find other diversions and allurements, which are more agreeable to their inclinations than the thoughts and hopes of heaven: they have *something*, how mean and trifling soever it is, which they call their happiness, that employs their time, and deludes their pursuits (as children are diverted with their toys) to the neglect of greater and better things. But when this
world

world is at an end, and can enchant them no longer; when they open their eyes in another state of existence, and see themselves stripped of all that they called happiness, without any thing that can afford consolation, but what they have refused, and which now they never can obtain; when they are left to deplore this loss, and to deplore it to all eternity; what words can express the sinner's anguish? What a piercing thought will it be, when a man sees himself shut out of heaven, to remember that God would have bestowed everlasting blessings upon him, but he rejected the offer, and would not be persuaded to ac-

cept of heaven by all the endearments of infinite love!

Christ purchased heaven for *all*; and the blessed saints have thought it worth while to obey God here, that they might be happy hereafter, while foolish sinners have despised heaven, and lost it. The self-condemnation and remorse wherewith such guilty souls will torment themselves, God Almighty grant that we may never feel.

A PRAYER.

O Lord of heaven and earth!
who hast been pleased to place us
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in our present state of existence, as the preparation for a better; deliver me, I pray thee, from those excessive cares of this world, which would so engross my time and thoughts as to make me forget thy heavenly promises. May my desires after worldly possessions be moderated, by considering their uncertain and unsatisfying nature; and while others are laying up treasures on earth, may I be rich towards God! Give me to know the station in which thou hast fixed me, and steadily to pursue the duties of it. But never let me be too busy to attend to those great affairs, which lie between thee and

my soul: never so engrossed with the concerns of time, as to neglect the interests of eternity. In the midst of ten thousand snares and dangers, which beset us from within and from without; permit me to look up unto thee, with humble entreaty, that thou wouldst deliver my soul from the dominion of sin; and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil. More especially guard me, O Lord, from the love of sensual pleasure. Give me not over to work uncleanness with greediness, since thy holy apostle Paul has taught us that to be carnally minded is death. Let me never wander after strange
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and forbidden pleasures, nor be inordinate in the use of those which thou hast allowed: but grant that all my actions may be governed by the rules of temperance and sobriety, having always before my eyes that strict account which I must one day give. May it please thee, therefore, to purify my soul by the influence of thy Holy Spirit, that I may always shun unlawful gratifications, more solicitously than others pursue them. May I still remember the superior dignity of my spiritual nature, and may the pleasures of the *man* and the *christian* be sought as my noblest happiness. May my soul rise on
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the wings of contemplation, to the regions of invisible glory: and may I endeavour to fit myself, under the influences of divine grace, for the society of those just persons made perfect, who are freed from all the gross delights by which spirits dwelling in flesh are so often ensnared, and in which they so often lose the memory of their high original, and of those noble hopes which alone are proportionable to it. By the innocency of my life, and the constancy of my faith, let me diligently improve those transient moments, which thou hast allotted to me in this state of probation. May I pass through
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earth with my heart and hopes set upon heaven, and feel the attraction still stronger as I approach still nearer to my latter end: that when every earthly object shall disappear, the glories of thy heavenly kingdom may meet my astonished view, with those promised joys “ which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive.” And this I humbly implore, through the Son of thy eternal love, Jesus Christ the righteous, who by the sacrifice of himself, offered once for all, became a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world:

world: and who now liveth and reigneth with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

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CHAP. III.

HAVING examined in the former chapters, how little just comparison there is between the toys of this transitory life, and the concerns of an eternal state; it may now be profitable to inquire into the means of obtaining what we know to be worthy of every effort in our power to gain. And for our instruction on this important point, we can refer to the very words of our blessed Lord himself, who on being asked—which is the great commandment in the law? gave the following answer—“Thou shalt love the
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Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it,—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matt. xxii. 40. From this plain lesson, it is evident that our “duty towards God, and towards our neighbour,” are the two great hinges on which our holy religion turns. The heads of these duties are fully and forcibly explained in the Catechism, and are farther illustrated in the Liturgy of our church: the language of which breathes the spirit of vital godli-

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ness; and on all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is clear and decisive. This circumstance, indeed, may not recommend it to those who have imbibed the spirit of the present day; in which, indifference to all religious truth has overflowed, like a deluge, almost every rank and order of men. Those pious divines who formed our Liturgy, fought not to please men, but God. They fought not to gratify the pride of learning, or the presumption of philosophy; and took care therefore not to open a passage, whereby man's fallen reason might be exalted to the throne of judgment, while the "oracles of
F God,"

God," in a state of degradation, are placed at the footstool. Ease of conscience in those persons, who, while they pretend respect for divine revelation, trample it under their feet, was no part of their concern. But they taught men to believe, what the holy apostles and martyrs attested with their dying breath, that "there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." The orthodoxy, therefore, of our public service, through all the varied forms of devotion, will be considered by every friend to truth, as one of its strongest recommendations,

tions, since the forms of worship harmonize with the word of God, as revealed to us in the Bible.

The fortress of unbelief, indeed, is seated in the human *heart*, not in the *head*. It originates in the will and affections, not in the understanding, which is forced into the service of these tyrants. Reason is made subservient to inclination. But that deadly nightshade, infidelity, no more would flourish, if the love of sin was destroyed from among the sons of men. Faith not only consists in the belief, but in the practice of the gospel. What God has chosen to reveal of himself in the holy

scriptures, may be easily comprehended; what he has chosen for the present to keep in reserve, no mortal efforts will ever be able to disclose. The simplest and most unlearned person who studies the sacred volume with a pure heart, and an undepraved mind, is practically wise: the brightest understanding, the most exalted genius, who attempts to go beyond it, becomes inevitably a fool. What is *clear* in Christianity, we shall find to be sufficient: what is *dubious*, will appear unnecessary to be decided; and what is most *obscure*, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed

formed upon the same subject. The Bible treats of a dispensation of God, which began before this world, and will not be finished till the world is at an end, and the eternal kingdom of God is established. It informs us of the institution of religion in paradise; with the original dependence of man upon his Maker; of a primitive state of man under a former covenant, which is now forfeited: of his temptation and fall; of the causes of death, and the promise of redemption. It founds a ritual on the remission of sins by the shedding of blood, and the benefits of intercession, which the Heathens

also acknowledged in the rites of their priesthood. It relates the dispersion of Gentile* nations, and the separation of the Hebrews. It foretells the manifestation of a Saviour in the flesh; the rejection of the Jews; the calling and conversion of the Heathens; the establishment of the Christian church; with its preservation against the powers of this world, and the gates of hell. It treats of a spiritual life, and renewed affections in its members; that they must even be born again in a spiritual manner, and re-

* *Gentile* is a term opposed to that of *Jew*, as the Romans styled all the rest of the world Barbarians but themselves.

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turn to a state of childish simplicity in their understandings. It assures us of the resurrection of the body after death, of the future judgment of man by Jesus Christ, of the glorification of the faithful, and the condemnation of the wicked. It opens to us an invisible world of spirits, some of whom are in alliance with God, and others in rebellion against him; assuring us, withal, that every human being will have their final portion with the one party or the other. The scriptures are the appointed means of enlightening the mind with true and saving knowledge. They show us what God hath done for us, and
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what he expects us to do for him. They show us the adversaries we have to encounter, and how to encounter them with success. They show us the mercy and the justice of the Lord; the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell. Thus they give to the unlearned and simple, an understanding of those matters, which philosophy for centuries sought in vain. The servants of God are also shown to us in every state and condition. We view them rich and poor, honoured and despised, in prosperity and in adversity, to teach us that "all things work together for good to those who love God." If temporal blessings

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ings are granted to the true believer, he accepts them as shadows of those which are eternal. If they are denied, he remembers that they are only shadows, and are therefore denied that he may fix his thoughts and affections more firmly on the substance. The gospel acts powerfully on the understanding, and produces a rational conviction that it is our interest as well as our duty to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” It produces demonstration in the conscience, that sin is the cause of present misery, and leads to eternal ruin: while holiness brings present happiness, and
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is an essential preparative for future glory. The love of Christ, when experienced in the soul, has a constraining power as much superior to the motives of modern philosophy, as the light of the sun to the glimmering of a glow-worm. The influence of divine truth turns duty into pleasure; devotion appears our highest privilege; prayer becomes delightful; and then it truly is, that "God's service is perfect freedom." The glorious gospel is not only beneficial to him who feels its influence; producing peace in his conscience, mildness in his temper, and contentment in his bosom: it not only conduces to domestic

domestic comfort, “making men to be of one mind in an house,” enabling husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, to fill up their several situations with mutual satisfaction and advantage: but its effects on society at large are equally benign. If the spirit of Christianity reigns in the hearts of kings, and those who are in authority, it diffuses its salutary influence on all around, filling the hearts of thousands with joy and gladness. If it possess the bosom of a subject, it makes him a quiet, peaceable, and useful member of society, producing loyalty to the constituted authorities, and obedience

dience to the laws of the country in which the person resides. "Submit yourselves," saith St. Peter, "to every ordinance of man for the *Lord's sake*; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness: but as the servants of God. Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king." 1 Pet. ii. 13—17.

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The Christian religion is not intended to operate as a *charm*, as some would seem to think; nor can its proper effect be produced by pronouncing certain words, attending at certain places, and performing certain ceremonies: but it is an active and vital principle operating on the heart, restraining the desires, affecting the general conduct, and as much regulating our conduct with the world, our business, pleasures and enjoyments, our conversations, designs and actions, as our behaviour in public worship, or even in private devotion. A Christian life seems to consist of two things, almost equally
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difficult; the adoption of good habits, and the reforming such as are evil. No one sets out on a religious course with a stock of native purity, or actual freedom from sin; for there is no such state in human life.

The natural heart is not a blank paper, whereon religion has nothing to do but to stamp characters of goodness: but many blots and defilements are to be erased, as well as fresh impressions to be made. The vigilant Christian, therefore, who acts with an eye to the approbation of his Maker, rather than to that of mankind; who looks to a future account, rather than to present

present indulgence; will find that diligently to cultivate the unweeded garden of his own heart; to mend the soil; to clear the ground; and to practise the painful labour of extirpation, will be that part of his duty, which will cost him most trouble and bring least worldly credit. But to him who acts from the noble motive of Christian obedience, and the animating power of Christian hope, the exercise is the reward; the work is the wages. For though, even in the highest possible exertion of religious principle, and the most diligent practices of all its train of virtues, man would still find evil propensities

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enough in his fallen nature, to make it necessary that he should counteract them with all his diligence: yet the prevailing temper would be in general *right*; the will would be in a great measure rectified: and the heart feeling its disease, would apply itself diligently to the only remedy. And though even the best men have infirmities enough to deplore, commit sins enough to keep them deeply humble, and feel more sensibly than others the imperfection of human nature: yet these have the internal consolation of knowing that they shall have to reckon with “ One who knoweth whereof they are made;” who will
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accept of faith and repentance instead of sinless perfection, and of humble sincerity instead of unspotted holiness.

Some, perhaps, on hearing this comfortable declaration, on the promise of pardon to repentance and belief, will secretly exclaim, “Would to God, I could repent and believe! But I find by experience, that I might as easily convey to England the waters of Euphrates, as force one tear of godly sorrow from my eyes, so as to pacify my conscience, or quiet my dreadful apprehensions of the consequence of sin!”—Happy, thrice happy conviction! This is a lesson

which was not learned in the school of philosophy, but in that of Jesus; from the silent instruction of his Holy Spirit. "Flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but our Father which is in heaven." Come then, and supplicate his heavenly grace. If you feel your own weakness, you are in a right temper for prayer, and will heartily "cry to the strong for strength."

A PRAYER.

Great, and holy Lord! I desire to humble myself here before thee, for that continual proneness to sin, which

which has made me so unlike to thee, and so contrary to what thy commandments require me to be. The snares of this world encircle me about, either to terrify me out of my duty, or to seduce me into my ruin. And, O! how ready is my sinful flesh to unite with the malicious tempter of mankind against my own soul! Innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me. The sin that is so apt to prevail against me, and to engage me in forbidden things,

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is hateful in thy sight, and destructive to my own soul. O wretched creature that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? when the custom of sinning has increased my evil inclinations, and weakened my dependance on thy holy word. With thee, O Lord Almighty! all things are possible; nothing can resist thy will: to thee the powers of hell are weakness: thou canst as easily *make* us holy, as *bid* us be so. O pity, then, thy poor tempted creature, and give me not up to a reprobate life, or to such blindness of mind and hardness of heart, as may render me past all spiritual recovery.

very. Let it be thy gracious pleasure, O Lord, that all my prevailing transgressions may flee, and perish at thy rebuke. Speak death to my sins, that my soul may live, and for ever bless thy name. Renew a right spirit in me, O Lord, that I may resist every evil propensity, and not conspire with the deadly enemy of souls to undo myself. Give me such a lively faith, as may enlighten my mind, purify my heart, and influence my whole conduct: such a faith as may enable me to receive Jesus Christ for my Saviour, and to live in such a manner as becomes the redeemed of the Lord. Amen, and Amen.

CHAP. IV.

RELIGION is never once represented in scripture, as an easy, or a light attainment. On the contrary, it is considered as a combat and a race; something expressive of exertion, activity, and progress. Some religious professors have gone so far as to bring their right faith as an apology for their wrong practice, because God, say they, is *all-merciful*! But this is a false and fatal application of a divine and comfortable truth. God, indeed, is merciful to sin repented of, but not to sin continued in. It is a most fallacious

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fallacious hope to expect that the Almighty will violate his own covenant, or that he is indeed *all* mercy to the exclusion of his other attributes of perfect holiness, purity, and justice. It is a dangerous presumption to rest on such general notions of infinite mercy, since nothing can be more delusive than this trust of being forgiven in our *own* way, after God has clearly revealed to us that he will only forgive us in *his* way. But the truth is, no one does truly trust in God who does not endeavour to obey him. For to break his laws, and yet to depend on his favour; to live in opposition to his will, and

and yet in expectation of his mercy; to violate his commands, and yet look for his acceptance; would not in any other instance be thought a reasonable ground of conduct, and yet it is by no means uncommon in religious concerns. But the life of a dissipated Christian is a perpetual struggle to reconcile impossibilities: it is an endeavour to unite what God has for ever separated, a quiet conscience with a disorderly life, a heart full of this world, and an unfounded dependence on the happiness of the next. A religious life is, indeed, a hard bondage to one immersed in the pleasures of the world and the flesh;

flesh; but to a perfect Christian, it is “perfect freedom.”

The Christian, especially he who is advanced and established in the way of truth, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his gospel. The honest warmth which he feels, when such a law is broken, such a gospel is despised, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would often degenerate into anger or contempt toward those who oppose themselves to his Creator, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence, and softened by a consciousness

sciousness of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited and very faint in its efficacy; that his attainments are weak and few, compared with his deficiencies: that his gratitude is very disproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unspeakably short of its prescribed rule: that he has nothing but what he has received; and has received nothing, but what, in a greater or less degree, he has misapplied, or misimproved. He is therefore a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives upon his multiplied forgiveness. He makes the gracious pattern of the Lord towards

wards himself, a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures. He cannot boast, nor is he forward to censure. He considers his own infirmities, lest he also be tempted; and thus he learns tenderness and compassion, and to bear patiently with those mistakes, prejudices, and weaknesses in others which once belonged to his own character; and from which, in this world of trial and temptation, he is but imperfectly freed. By a pious imitation of the divine goodness, he endeavours to fit himself for the participation of divine love; and forgives others their offences, that God, for Christ's sake, may

forgive him. He desires in all things to be transformed into the blessed image of his Redeemer, that he may be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

A truly Christian life, therefore, is a life of *charity*, of *faith*, and of *good works* conjointly. If the heart and lungs are separated, all bodily action ceases: in like manner if we separate any of these *three* essential parts of a Christian life from the other two, they all perish. But being united together, they tend to each other's perfection, and thereby to the perfection of all the principles of man. Man is a traveller,

veller, his life is a journey, heaven is his end, his road is through a wilderness, and he is in the dark. The word of God discovers to us our wanderings, it shows us when we have lost our way, and how we may recover it again. If we take this lamp into our hand, it will not only point out our course in general, but also direct us in every step, and “ guide our feet into the paths of peace.” For with whatever obscurities it has pleased God to shadow some parts of his written word, yet he has graciously ordered that whatever is necessary should be made manifest. And though “ *clouds and thick darkness* are the
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habitation of his throne," yet they are not the guides which he has left us to discover our duty. The whole of the gospel is adapted to the real wants of human nature, exhibiting rules of conduct often difficult indeed, but never impossible; holding out a living model to enforce the doctrine and to illustrate the precepts; offering everywhere the clearest notions of what we have to hope and what we have to fear; the strongest injunctions of what we are to believe, and the most explicit directions of what we are to do. In short, whoever examines the wants of his own heart, and the assistance which the
gospel

gospel furnishes, will find them to be two tallies which exactly correspond. Our holy religion becomes a *rule of life*; and that which constitutes its value, is its suitableness to the genius, condition, capacity, temper, and necessities of all mankind. The scriptures are the epistle of God to man, offering reconciliation, peace, and union with himself in glory; containing reasons why we should love him and each other, with directions how to show forth that love which, as the Apostle saith, is “the fulfilling of the law.”

The great purpose of revealed religion is to afford man a clear insight

sight of his dependance on the Supreme Being, by teaching him to consider God as his creator and governor, his parent and his judge. Those to whom Providence has granted the knowledge of the holy scriptures, have no need to perplex themselves with its difficulties, or to enforce their duty by doubtful motives. The Bible tells us, in plain and positive terms, that there is a way to life and a way to death; that there are acts which God will reward, and acts that he will punish: that with soberness, righteousness, and godliness, God will be well pleased; and that with intemperance, iniquity, and impiety, God will be offended.

offended: that of those who are careful to please him, the reward will be such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; and of those who, having offended him, die without repentance, the punishment will be inconceivably dreadful and severe.

As religion is not therefore, on the one hand, merely an opinion; so neither is it, on the other, merely an act: but it is a disposition, a habit, a temper. It is not a name, but a nature. It is a turning the whole mind to God: it is directing all the powers of the soul into an uniform desire to please him. This desire will naturally manifest itself in our doing all the good we can
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to our fellow-creatures in every possible way: for it will be found that neither of the two parts into which practical religion is divided can be performed with any degree of perfection but by those who unite both. For it may be doubted whether any man *does* "love his neighbour as himself," who does not first endeavour to "love God with all his heart." Piety may be defined, a strong general disposition to every thing that is right, breaking forth into every excellent action as the occasion presents itself. The temper must be ready in the mind, and the whole heart must be trained to every act of virtue to which it may

may be called out; to make the real Christian ready for every duty to which he may be commanded. Thus when a vein of Christianity runs through the whole mass of a man's life, it gives a new value to all his actions, and a new character to all his views. It transforms prudence and economy into Christian virtues: and every offering that is presented on the altar of charity, becomes truly consecrated, when it is the gift of obedience, and the price of self-denial.

Christianity then is assuredly something more than a mere set of rules; and piety, though an improper substitute for a good life, is
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indispensably necessary for its acceptance with God. The gospel never offers to make religion supersede morality, but every where clearly proves that morality is not the whole of religion. Piety is not only necessary as a *mean*, but is itself an important *end*. It is not only the best principle of moral conduct, but is an absolute duty in itself. Withdraw religion, and you shake all the pillars of morality. Religion will survive all the virtues of which it is the source; for we shall be living in the noblest exercises of piety, when we shall have no objects on which to exercise many human virtues. When there

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will be no distress to be relieved, no injuries to be forgiven, no evil habits to be subdued; there will be a Creator to be blessed and adored, a Redeemer to be loved and praised.

A MEDITATION.

WHAT, O my soul! are the sentiments that ought to spring up in thee, when admitted, either in the solemnities of public worship, or the retirement of private devotion, into the more immediate presence of thy Maker!—who does not govern but to bless—whose divine commands are sent to succour human

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man reason in search of happiness! Let thy law, Almighty Father! be the rule, and thy glory the constant end of all I do. Let me not build virtue on any notions of honour, but of honour to thy name: and let not my love of thee be forgotten, in the love of my fellow-creatures.

Let not thy bounties remove the giver from my mind; nor the love of pleasures make me forget the fountain from which they flow. When joys entice, let me ask their title to my heart: when evils threaten, let me see thy mercy through the cloud; and discern the great hazard of having all things

to my wish. Let the follies of the multitude less allure than alarm me; and their danger, not example, determine my choice. In this day of dissipated pleasure, so lower my taste, as to make me relish the *com-forts* of life. And in the perpetual swarm of accidents, and flux of things, prefer me from being so desperate as to depend upon *to-mor-row*: a dependance that must be the ruin of to-day, as that is of eternity. Let my whole existence be ever before me: nor let the terrors of the grave turn back my view. When temptations arise, and virtue staggers, let imagination sound the final trumpet, and

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judgment lay hold on eternal life. In what is well begun, grant me to persevere; and to know that none are wise, but they who determine to be wiser still. And since the fear of thee, O Lord, is the *beginning* of wisdom; and in its *progress*, its surest shield: turn the love of this world entirely out of my heart, and place that guardian angel, thy blessed fear, in its stead. Teach me, O Lord God Almighty! that there is nothing in comparison of thee—that I may bless thy name, sing thy praises, love thy law, enjoy thy peace, and hope thy glory, till my final hour. This will heighten good and soften evil in the present

present life: and when death summons, I shall sleep sweetly in the dust, till his mighty Conqueror bids the trumpet sound; and then shall I, through his merits, awake to eternal glory. Amen.

CHAP. V.

THERE are few expressions in more general use, and yet less generally understood, than *the spirit of Christianity*. We are perpetually appealing to it as the standard of moral good and evil, without duly considering how very comprehensive it is, and how little suited to the passions and prejudices of mankind. But these are times when it is especially incumbent upon us to acquire a just notion of those principles which constitute the basis of our actions, both as individuals and members of society:
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and there cannot be any time so proper for this consideration as when religion is attacked by appeals to history for the effects it has produced upon mankind.

The true way to judge of the effects religion has produced, is to observe its influence upon those who follow its precepts, not upon those who use it as the cloak of hypocrisy, or the mask of worldly interest. If we consider what it enjoins as the rule of action, we shall soon be convinced that its effects must be of the most beneficial kind. There is not a vice, either private or national, which it does not expressly forbid. There
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is not a virtue that can adorn humanity, which it does not command, purify, and exalt. It becomes us, therefore, as members of the church of Christ, to examine whether we do not strengthen the arguments and invite the accusations of profligate men, when we neglect to manifest the spirit of Christianity in our actions, as well as words.

The step from a neglect of religious ceremonies to a violation of religious duties is very rapid. The external observances of Christianity are all needful, therefore, in the present state of things. But let us not mistake them for Christianity itself.

itself. Let us not mistake that which is an ornament for a natural beauty. We may be assured that the Author of our holy religion regards not external observances but as they contribute to internal purity. In the present state of society they are highly necessary: they produce a uniting effect upon us as members of the Christian church: but we bring them into contempt, when we do not carry the sentiments they are calculated to inspire into our common intercourse with the world. If we indulge detraction, malice, revenge, envy, pride, avarice, or any of the sordid and sensual passions, and yet talk of
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our veneration for the spirit of Christianity, we are guilty of secret treachery to the cause of the religion we profess.

If we reflect upon the consequences which would flow from imbibing the Christian spirit, and carrying its effects into private life, it must ever be a matter of deep regret that it does not engage more general attention. The mutual forbearance which Christianity inculcates; the contentedness with our situation, which it teaches; the forgiveness of injuries, which it enjoins; these three principles only, if carried into practice, could not fail to produce peace and happiness.

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There is, perhaps, no greater mistake than the common notion, that a little religion will make people happy, but that a high degree of it is incompatible with all enjoyment. For surely *that* religion can add little to a man's happiness which restrains him from the commission of a wrong action, but which does not pretend to root out the bad principle from which the act proceeded. This would be only cropping the blossom of a weed, which soon might shoot forth again. A religion which ties the hands without changing the heart, which subdues not the desire but forbids the gratification, is indeed

an uncomfortable state. Such a religion, though it may gain a man something on the side of reputation, will give but little inward comfort, if his heart be still left a prey to that temper which produced the evil, even though terror or shame may have prevented the outward act. That people devoted to the pursuits of a dissipated life should conceive a religious life to be difficult and even unattainable, it is easy to believe. That they should conceive it to be an unhappy state, is the consummation of their error and ignorance. For that a *rational* being should have his understanding enlightened; that an *immortal* being should

should have his views extended and enlarged; that a *helpless* being should have a consciousness of assistance; that a *sinful* being should have the prospect of pardon; or a *fallen* one, the assurance of restoration; does not seem a probable ground of unhappiness; and on any other subject such reasoning would be inadmissible.

These considerations are of great importance to us, as the individuals of a nation professing Christianity. It is not of much concern to us what other nations do: our anxiety ought to be employed on ourselves. We have for some time enjoyed the blessings of a pure and

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mild religion, and we have profited by it. We owe all we possess of rational happiness to this source. What is there amiable in our national character that may not be traced to our religion? Whence our humanity, generosity, and magnanimity?—Are these advantages inconsiderable? Are they worth preserving? or ought they to be given up? For given up they must be, if we bestow all our attention upon empty boasting, and professions of Christianity, while we forget to cultivate its *spirit*.

When we consider the natural tendency of the Christian religion to improve the conduct of man-

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kind, and the actual effects it has produced wherever it has been duly cultivated, the opposition it sometimes meets with, appears strangely inconsistent; because those who oppose it, when pressed to offer a substitute, are forced to borrow their scheme from the very system they despise. Modern infidels do not seem to be aware, that, even though they live in a constant neglect or contempt of every external observance Christianity enjoins, they cannot divest themselves of the effects it produces on their minds. If a man should say, " I despise the language of my country, and it becomes me to form a language for
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myself, more rational and consistent"—we should not have a very favourable opinion of that man's understanding. The case, however, is precisely the same with him who endeavours to reject Christianity, and to set up a more perfect system of his own.

That *man* should be *religious*, proceeds as much from the constitution of his nature, as that he should be *social*. Of all the beings in this world, man alone is formed to practise religious duties: for, however ignorant of religious principles the most barbarous savages may be, and however indifferent to religious service the careless and diffi-

dissipated in civilized nations may appear; it would be equally false to conclude, either from the ignorance of the one or the indifference of the other, against the general tendency of mankind to religion, as it would be to conclude, that, because savages are wild, therefore men are not born for society; or because thoughtless persons never reflect, therefore men are not born to follow reason. Arguing from experience founded on facts, we are convinced beyond doubt, that God intended man to be a religious creature. Much of our present happiness depends upon the cultivation of religious principles, and observance of

religious duties; and this happiness will be greater or less, in proportion as the system of religion which we have embraced is more or less pure. With respect to ourselves, we have a system calculated in every part of it to promote private and social happiness, by enforcing all that we can think or call *virtue*. Christianity sets forth to us that there is an Almighty God, who will recompense every one in a future state, according to the degrees of goodness which have been experienced in this life: that there is an eternal Son who intercedes for the return of God's favour to such as have sinned and are sincerely penitent

penitent for their transgressions: that there is a sanctifying Spirit, who, by his influence on the soul, assists every one that devoutly and earnestly prays for assistance. We are encouraged, in the first instance, never to swerve from our duty, by consideration that the recompence will be proportioned to our degrees of perfection: we are then prevented from abandoning ourselves to despair after the commission of sin, by promise of pardon upon unfeigned repentance and actual amendment: and we are lastly assured, that divine aid will strengthen our natural weakness in the hour of temptation to do wrong, if we will

will but lift up our souls in earnest supplication to Heaven! Nothing is here omitted that can be done for the inducement of rational agents to live in the habits of virtue and piety. The rewards are distant, that man may act with a more free choice in determining on the line of conduct he will pursue. Pardon is given to repentance, that man may not, after he has done wrong, think it unavailable to amend his life. Assistance spiritual is imparted to the suppliant, that his endeavours to be virtuous may be carried into effect.

In essence so pure, in rites so plain, Christianity bespeaks its divine

vine origin, and exceeds every system of religion that has appeared in the known world.

If a stranger to Christianity, and who had never heard the name, were to inquire what were its doctrines; the answer would be, that it enjoins nothing but what experience will prove to be beneficial, and forbids nothing but what experience will prove to be hurtful to the peace and happiness of mankind. No rational creature could hesitate a moment in adopting such a system; and as we, as a nation, have long been sensible that it is the only religion calculated to make men happy, the blame will lie heavy

heavy indeed, if, when we see other nations suffering from ignorance or contempt of its precepts, we should content ourselves with an empty profession only, and neglect those duties, those habits, and that temper, which truly constitute the essence and spirit of Christianity.

In order to a national reformation, every individual must look first at home, and be intent upon mending *himself*. For which purpose, there should be a deliberate and close inspection into our own hearts and ways; and whilst we consider God as the discerners of the one and the superintendent of the

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the other, as knowing all that passes within or without us; we should deal openly with him, and impartially with ourselves: for the leaven of hypocrisy will spoil the whole act, and leave us in a worse condition than we were before. Whatever secret enemies we discover under the appearance of darling favourites, they must be brought forth and offered up as sacrifices at the altar of sincerity and truth: and we must evince by an exemplary conduct that our return into the way of righteousness is not formal but real, and that we add, in every sense, to our *faith, virtue*. This is necessary upon a general view of things.

things. But upon a more particular attention to our trying times, when the most artful and strenuous attempts are made to overthrow our faith, and poison our moral principles; when infidelity stalks about at noon-day, and vice affects an air of triumph; when the essential truths of the gospel are attacked with blasphemous boldness, and the very fundamental points of all religion are derided or denied; surely such as profess themselves Christians should particularly attend to their own conduct, and to the conduct of those over whom they possess a natural influence.

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religious concerns result mischievous and deplorable consequences. For when the stone walls of virtue are broken down, introduction is given to confusion and every evil work.

Some instances of particular importance demand particular notice: the attending to the moral and religious training of children and servants, the growing neglect of which is every day more and more visible; the laying uniformly a proper stress upon family government, and family devotion; the serious, regular, and devout observance of the Christian sabbath, not only in our own persons, but in

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those of our dependants; the carefully avoiding all undue expenses of dress and parade in ourselves, and discouraging it as much as we can in others; the checking an habitual fondness for pleasures, and the making it our earnest endeavour (as we then by the help of frugality more easily may) to comfort others with that comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.

A little enlargement upon these particulars may not prove unprofitable.

Religion is the only sure basis of happiness, whether temporal or eternal; it is the corner-stone, without

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out which no building of this sort can be fitly framed, or have in it either beauty or duration. It is so interwoven with nature, that nature without it can no longer exist. It is *that*, without which there is no living with dignity and comfort in this world, and no suitable preparation to be made for another. What then is the first thought which should strike us, but the importance of improving every occasion of placing every part of our duty to God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves, in the most influencing view before those, whom (if we are not unnaturally indifferent to) we must be inclined as well as

obliged to preserve from misery, and to direct in the road to blessing and to Heaven?

Our own offspring have a call upon us, which nothing but extreme barbarity can resist; and others, related to us in an inferior way, have a right in this respect which cannot be disregarded without disobedience to the Christian law; without mischief to them and reproach to ourselves. Whence is it but from omissions of this kind (omissions indeed sadly countenanced by custom), that the too general depravity in the lower ranks of people arises? Whence is it but from profligate examples in higher life,

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life, and a total indifference to the moral conduct of those beneath them, that their dependants so frequently become dissolute and abandoned? While the master is pursuing his dissipated career till the morning blushes on his revels, the servant is loitering out his hours at the ale-house in drinking, gaming, or worse. The upper orders of society are not only censurable, therefore, in regard to their *own* misconduct, but on account of the effects which, in point of influence, they produce upon the principles and manners of *others*. Did the spirit of Christianity more generally prevail, complicated good would re-

sult from it to the rich, to their dependants, and to their country. It is the only effectual antidote against that licentious poison which has been long increasing amongst us, and which is in almost every sense our present distinguished disgrace. Oppose then, to this prevailing contagion the powerful cure of living "quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty;" of giving every possible proof of submission and regard to established government and lawful authority; and, if politics must be taught, let it be "to submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's and for conscience' sake;" to render to all
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their due, to accuse no man falsely, to do violence to no man, to be content with the station we are placed in by Providence, to put away lying and fraud, to speak the truth in brotherly love, to wish that they may prosper who do the will of the Lord their God, to pray for the welfare of Jerusalem, that "peace may be within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces." This is the best and most forcible charm by which to drive away those infernal fiends, discontent, faction, and tumult. This is the surest check to violence and insurrection, by chaining down wild ambition, wanton riot, and furious resent-

resentment. This is the only way to secure "peace on earth," and to diffuse and establish "good-will among men."

A PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God and heavenly Father! who upholdest all things in heaven and in earth; who rulest over all the kingdoms of the world, and disposest of them according to thy good pleasure; we acknowledge that our many and great provocations have justly drawn down thy displeasure against us as a nation. But thou art a merciful

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God, full of compassion, long-suffering, and of great goodness. Thou sparest when we deserve punishment, and in thy judgment thinkest upon mercy. Thy arm, stretched out in time of danger, hath oftentimes wrought deliverance for this land. Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable still unto thy people. Spare us, good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood, and still signalized with thy wonderful mercies.

O Lord God of hosts! make us a way to escape out of those fears and dangers wherein our sins have enclosed us, that peace may be restored, and the gospel of peace continued

tinued to us and our posterity as long as the world endures. Let us learn righteousness by thy judgments, and not dare to go on in our rebellious trespasses against thee, when thou hast ordained tumultuous commotions against us. Dispel the clouds, and turn away the storms, and clear up the face of heaven, so blackened now over our heads. Hide us from the gathering together of the froward, and from the insurrection of wicked doers. Let us lift up our souls unto the Lord, from whence cometh our help, and lay up our treasure in that kingdom which cannot be moved. Let not hypocrisy or profaneness
disturb

disturb the peace of the church,
nor schisms and causeless divisions
weaken it; but grant us to be of
one heart and one mind in serving
thee our God, according to thy
holy will. Take away all hatred
and prejudice, and whatever else
may hinder us from godly union
and concord: that as there is but
one body, and one spirit, and one
hope of our calling; one Lord,
one faith, one baptism; one God
and Father of all; so we may
henceforth be all of one heart and
of one soul, united in one sacred
bond of truth and peace, of faith
and charity, and may with one
mind and one mouth glorify thee,
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through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who with the Father and the Holy
Spirit liveth and reigneth ever,
one God, world without end.
Amen.

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CHAP. VI.

PIETY has been defined "the discharge of our duty to God:" and devotion has been restricted to "an act of external worship." Devotion, however, more comprehensively considered, is neither private nor public prayer; though prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God.

He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God. He

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is the devout man who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his daily life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.

We readily acknowledge that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our prayers; that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him; that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and such ends as are suitable to his glory. Now let any one but find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same

same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life. For there is not the least shadow of a reason why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers, why we should then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will, but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life: for any ways of our life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time, or money, that is not according to the will of God, are as great failings as prayers that are not according to the will

of God. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, and to devote all the actions of our lives to God; were it not absolutely necessary to walk before him in wisdom and holiness, doing every thing in his name and for his glory; there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers: nay, such prayers would be absurdities; they would be like prayers for *wings*, when it was no part of our duty to *fly*.

As sure, therefore, as there is any wisdom in praying for the spirit of God, so sure is it that we are to make that spirit the rule of *all* our actions. As sure as it is our duty

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duty to look wholly unto God in our prayers; so sure is it, that it is our duty to live wholly unto God in our lives. But we cannot be said to live unto God, unless we live unto him in all the ordinary actions of our lives, unless he be the rule and measure of all our ways. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in employment or diversion, whether they consume our time or our money, are alike an offence to God.

It is for want of *knowing*, or at least *considering* this, that we see such a mixture of contradiction in the lives of some people. They are strict, perhaps, as to times and

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places

places of worship; but when the service of the church is over, they appear like those who seldom or never come there. In their manner of spending their time and money, in their cares and pleasures, in their labours and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This frequently makes the licentious part of mankind ridicule those who are devout, because they see their devotion goes no farther than their prayers; and that they live in as free an enjoyment of all the follies of life as other people, till the time of prayer returns again. This flimsy veil of piety justly makes its wearers the ridicule of careless and

and worldly people; not because they are really devoted to God, but because they are seen to have no other pretence to the character of devout persons, except the form of joining in occasional prayer.

If we were to see a man pretending to act *wholly* with regard to God in every thing that he did, and yet at the same time neglect *all* prayer, whether public or private; should we not be surprised at such a man, and wonder how he could have so much folly along with so much religion? Yet this is as reasonable as for any person to pretend to strictness in devotion, and yet let his life pass away with-

out any pious observances; for it is as great an absurdity to suppose holy prayers without a life suitable to them, as to suppose an holy life without prayers.

The sum of the matter is briefly this: either reason and religion prescribe rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not. If they do; then it is as necessary to govern all our actions by those rules, as it is necessary to worship God. For if religion teaches us how to use the world, and to direct our conduct in our passage through it: if it tells us what tempers we are to have in common life; how we are to behave
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towards the sick, the poor, the old, the destitute; if it tells us whom we are to treat with particular love, or whom we are to regard with particular esteem; if it directs us how we are to treat the failings of others, and how we are to mortify and restrain our own evil passions; he must be very weak who can think these parts of religion are not to be observed with as much exactness as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

Our blessed Saviour and his apostles are continually enforcing the moral precepts which relate to common life; instructing us on every occasion to do to others as we would

would they should do unto us. They invite us to renounce the *world*, and differ in every temper and mode of life, from the tenour and conduct of worldly men; to renounce all its precarious good, to fear none of its transitory evils; to reject its perishable allurements; and have no longings after its short-lived felicities; to be as new-born babes, that are born into a new state of things; to live as pilgrims, in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life; to take up our daily cross; to deny ourselves; to cherish meekness and poverty of spirit; to forsake the pride and
vanity

vanity of riches ; to live in the profoundest state of humility ; to bear up with Christian fortitude and resignation under all our worldly sufferings ; to resist “ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ; ” to bear injuries without seeking revenge ; to forgive and pray for our enemies ; to regard the whole human race as our brethren, and to live in fellowship with all mankind ; to give up our whole hearts and affections to God ; and strive, by running the race that is set before us with patience, to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory :—
this is the common devotion
which

which was taught by the great Founder of our faith, in order to make it the *common practice* of all his followers.

If *contempt of the world*, and heavenly-mindedness, are necessary acquirements for those who profess themselves Christians, it is necessary that they should appear in the common course of their lives. If *self-denial* be a condition of salvation, all who would be saved, must make it a part of their ordinary life. If *humility* be a Christian duty, then the common life of a Christian should display a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If *meekness of spirit* be re-

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quired, it should appear in the tenour and temper of every day of our lives. If we are to *relieve* the indigent, to succour the infirm, to "visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction;" these charitable virtues must appear in our common conduct, as far as we can render ourselves able to fulfil them. If we are to *forgive* our enemies, we must make our life a visible exercise and demonstration of our good-will to all. If *thankfulness* and *contentment* be duties to God, they are the duties of every day, and in every circumstance of our lives. If we are to be *artless* as new-born babes, we can only become so by

renouncing every thing that is dishonest and vicious in our commerce with the world. If we design to *follow* Christ, it must be in our common mode of spending every day; and if this holy disposition does not enter into our habitual practice, we do not live the life of Christians: since Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the general habits of the world, by conforming to the folly of custom, and gratifying the passions and tempers which worldly men delight in; it is so far from indulging us in any of these propensities, and in "following a multitude to do evil," that all the

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virtues which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living *above*, and *contrary* to the world in all the common actions of our life.

But yet, though all this is very plain, yet it is as plain, that there is little of this conduct to be observed, even among the better sort of people. You see them perhaps often at church, and pleased with fine preachers; but look into their lives, and you perceive that they are just the same sort of people as others are who make no pretences to devotion. The difference that you discover between them, is only the difference of their natural tempers.

They have the same taste of the world, the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys; the same vain turn of mind; the same fondness for state and equipage; the same pride in dress; the same self-love, and readiness in censuring others; the same shallow friendships and groundless dislikes; the same levity of manners; the same eagerness after diversions; the same trifling modes of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the fashionable world. They do not live as if they belonged to different orders of beings, had different views in their heads, and different rules and measures for all their

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their actions ; and yet, if they do not differ in those points which are here described, can it with any truth be said that the *one* is a good Christian, and the *other* not? And if Christianity has not changed a man's mind and temper with relation to these things, what can we say that it has done for him?

A reasonable inquirer may therefore ask, how it comes to pass, that the lives even of the better sort of people are thus strangely contrary to the spirit and principles of Christianity.

But before a direct answer is given, it may also be fitly inquired, how it comes to pass that *swearing*

is so common a vice among Christians. Among men it is so common, that perhaps there are more than two in three who are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives, swearing more or less, just as it happens, some constantly, others only now and then, as it were by chance. How comes it to pass, that the greater part of mankind are guilty of so gross and profane a sin as this? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it. It is against an express commandment, and the most plain doctrine of our blessed Saviour. Do but find the reason why the generality of men live in the practice of
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this notorious vice, and the reason will then be found why the generality even of the better sort of people live so contrary to the precepts of Christianity.

Now the reason of common swearing is this:—*because men have not the intention to please God in all their actions.* For let a man but have so much piety in his soul as to *intend* to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will swear no more. It will be as impossible for him to swear, whilst he feels this intention within himself, as it is impossible for a man who intends
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to please his benefactor to insult and abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a *sincere intention* as this, and that he has no just reason to call himself a disciple of Christ, who is not thus far advanced in holiness. And yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety that such a mixture of sin and folly is seen in the world. It is for want of this *intention* that men who profess religion, yet live in habits of swearing and sensuality. It is for want of this *intention* that women who appear devout, yet live in all the fooleries and vanities of indolence and dissipation. For

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let a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will no more paint or dress in order to excite public notice, than she will dance upon a rope to do it. She will know that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian character as the other. It was this *general intention* that made the early professors of Christianity such eminent instances of practical piety. And if the reader will here stop, and seriously ask himself, why he is not as pious as the primitive Christians were?—his own heart will tell him that it is neither through ignorance nor
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inability, but entirely because *he never thoroughly intended it.*

Let a tradesman have this intention, and it will make his every-day business a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to his will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labour and travel, because, by so doing, he can procure some good to himself and others. But he will consider what methods, what application can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and render a life of trade a life of integrity and piety.

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have this intention, and it will lead him to a wise and regular course of life. He will not live in vicious idleness, or gross intemperance, because these things are unholy, and obnoxious to his Creator. He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praiseworthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, or the careless consumption of our time; but he asks whether God is pleased with these things, or whether they are the appointed ways of obtaining his favour. He does not inquire whether it be pardonable to hoard up money,

money, whilst the widow and the orphan, the sick and the infirm want to be relieved; but he asks whether God has required these things at our hands, and whether we shall be called to account at the last day for them. For it is not his intent to live in such ways as God may *perhaps* pardon; but to be diligent in the discharge of such duties as God will *infallibly* reward.

We observe two persons. One is regular in public and private prayer; the other is not. One flutters away his time in visiting and diversions; and dissipates his fortune in selfish extravagance.

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Another, careful of employing every day to some useful purpose, divides his hours by the rules of reason and religion, and expends the greater part of his income in works of benevolence and charity. Now the difference in these two persons does not arise from any secret cause, that one has strength and power to act thus, and the other has not; but it is entirely owing to this, that one *intends to please God* in the right use of all his time and all his money, and the other has *no intention* about it.

Here therefore let us judge our own hearts sincerely; let us not vainly content ourselves with the
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common disorders of our lives, fancying that they are such imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable weakness and frailty of our natures: but let us be assured that these disorders arise from the sole cause here assigned; and that the reason why we see no real self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no exemplary piety in the common lives of Christians, is because they do not intend sincerely to practise these virtues; because they do not cultivate the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity, namely,

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namely — *an intention to please*
God *in all our actions.*

A MEDITATION.

Is there any dream like the dream
of life, which amuses with short-
lived phantoms, to the neglect and
disregard of eternal concerns? Is
there any folly like the folly of
man, who is too busily employed
on trifles to be at leisure for se-
rious reflection? Do I not, O my
soul! when I consider death, think
of it only as a miserable separation
from the enjoyments of this life?
Do I not think of it with dread,
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rather on account of leaving a prosperous situation, than on going unprepared to meet the Judge of the whole earth? Yet what is there dreadful in death, but the consequences of it? What does any thing signify to a dead man, but the state his soul is in? If I am going into the joys of heaven, can there be any reason to grieve, that this should happen to me before I come to a mature age? If I am to go among lost spirits, can there be any cause for being more content, because this happens to me when I am old and full of riches? If good angels are ready to receive my soul, can it be any grief to me
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that I should die in a cottage or a garret? And if I am to be consigned to a place of torments, can it afford any comfort that I resign my breath under a canopy of state? The greatness and importance of those things which follow death, make all that goes before sink into less than nothing. What a dreadful infatuation is it, that the bustle and business of life, or the idle vanities of it, should keep us in such a state of unconcern to the everlasting happiness or misery which awaits us after this short period of probation! For in the midst of this deadly stupor, what numbers of souls are surprised with a sum-

mons into the other world! Some are taken from their shops and farms, others from their diversions, others at their own fire-sides; and all perhaps at an hour when they least expected it. Affrighted at the approach of death, confounded at the vain issue of their earthly projects, and astonished at the folly of their past lives; conscience becomes their accuser, brings all their life-long sins to remembrance, torments them with vain compunction and fruitless remorse, presents them with the speedy prospect of being arraigned before an offended Judge, who sentences them to have their portion with the worm that never dies,

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dies, the fire that is never quenched, and the wailings which never cease. O! let me bless God that I am not yet of this number! Let me adore his still-extended goodness, that time and strength are given me to work out my salvation; and let me supplicate the gracious assistance of his Holy Spirit, that the continuance of my life may not add to the measure of my guilt. O Lord! thou requirest truth in the inward parts; for unto thee all hearts are open, all desires known, and from thee no secrets can be hid. Do thou, therefore, in thy tender mercy pardon me, for all such hypocrisy and treacherous dealing as I have

have been guilty of towards thee. Impress on my soul, a steady and sincere desire, a constant and uniform intention to please thee in all my actions; that my life may be useful, and my death happy. Let me not be *almost* but *altogether* a Christian; and not so much concerned to *seem* religious, as to be so *in deed* and *in truth*, that I may secretly rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience. Give me grace so to redeem the days and years passed in neglect of the duties which thou hast set before me, in vain thoughts, in unworthy pursuits, in sloth, and in folly, that I may apply my heart to true wisdom;

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dom; and by repentance obtain forgiveness. Let the doing of thy holy will, the honouring of thy blessed name, and the enjoying of thy heavenly favour, be the great end which I aspire after in all my undertakings: that when it shall be thy pleasure to call me hence, I may die with just confidence in thy mercy; and be received among those sinners to whom sorrow and reformation shall have obtained pardon, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

CHAP. VII.

THAT GOD ought to be worshipped, is a principle of natural religion, immediately arising from an acknowledgment of his existence, in whatever relation we consider him. He is our Maker, the parent of the whole family of mankind: he has then a paternal right to every expression of filial respect and reverence. He is the Lord, the Sovereign of nature, whose dominion extends over all creation: he has then a just claim to universal homage. He is the Ruler of the world, on whom our
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existence depends: we must then think it reasonable to address him for protection. He is our supreme Benefactor, who every day confers some new, or repeats some former blessing: we must then acknowledge our obligations to offer up praises and adoration for his goodness. He is the most amiable and transcendent of beings, the source of all purity and all perfection: to him then should all the best affections of our soul breathe love and veneration. As far as the blessings derived from HIM, the fountain of all blessings, exceed the good offices we receive one from another, so
much

much better right has He to our gratitude and praise!

If you search the world, says an eminent heathen author*, you may find cities without wealth, without walls, without princes: but no man ever saw a city without a deity, without a temple, and without prayers. Whence it should seem that devotion is natural to the human mind, and as characteristic of our species as reason itself. No argument can render it clearer than it appears by its own light. We have an inherent perception of the propriety and rectitude of walking

* Plutarch.

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humbly with our God, as well as of doing justly to men. That we ought to worship the Lord our Maker by the best expressions of regard, submission, and humility, is as self-evident as the obligation to any of the social duties. The Christian Lawgiver, however, has added *his* authority to the law of reason and nature, and has also superadded an instruction not given in nature—that we should offer up our prayers in *his* name.

The worship of God is attended with the happiest effects. It is itself virtue, and instrumental to virtue. No other method can be conceived more effectual to keep
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alive in the soul a sense of God's immediate providence; to bring us under an habitual belief of his inspection; to open the mind to serious reflections, devout sentiments, and virtuous resolutions. Public worship may also naturally be expected to promote peace and goodwill: because when we assemble in the duties of devotion, we ought all to consider ourselves allied to each other, as brethren, heirs of the same hopes, and children of the same Father who is in heaven.

A sense of general duty, and a habit of devotion daily encouraged under our own roofs, will be the best introduction to an attendance

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upon *public worship*: that happy employment of soul and body, which beyond all other acts discovers the excellence of human nature, proclaims its dependence and its gratitude, expresses its faith and hope, and joyful expectation; brings it to a solemn intercourse with its Redeemer, its Sanctifier, and its God; and makes it, as it were, anticipate its future blissful state, when “mortality shall be swallowed up of life.” Strange is it, that a remissness in this respect should be seen among Christians even in a single instance, but stranger still, and most deeply to be lamented, that a *neglect* of the

Lord's Day, that great day of Christian triumph, a day made so memorable, and dear, and interesting, on many accounts, to mankind, should be growing into a popular habit, infomuch that every idle pretence is thought a sufficient excuse for deserting the service of God; nay, when even that portion of time which he most positively claims as appropriate to his divine Majesty, is squandered with indecent disregard, or with an appearance of open contempt and defiance, by which perhaps no age but our own has been degraded since the first planting of Christianity in our island. But if God's
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express command—"Ye shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary,"—is insufficient to prevent or subdue this alarming evil; can it be a wonder that the ministers of his sacred word, however intent upon their duty, should utter their admonitions without effect? If levity, and attachment to worldly pleasures, render us totally neglectful of expressing our thankfulness to God for his blessings; do we not hereby discover such a want of proper feeling, such a callousness and corruption in our natures, as shows our principles to be immoral, and must justly expose us to the

high displeasure of Heaven? What can be the probable consequence of the heads of families deserting their respective charge, and leaving the young and inexperienced, the ignorant and uninformed, and that too at the most critical period of life, but that inlet to all wickedness, — SABBATH-BREAKING? This, in course, leads to an intermixture with improper company, and by a too easy transition, a surrender of what right disposition there might before have been to resist surrounding temptation. Hence it is that SUNDAY, that day of the LORD in a most peculiar sense, is, instead

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instead of being kept holy, devoted to public ramblings*, to travelling, to unseasonable entertainment, and often, it is to be feared, to places not merely of levity and dissipa-

* In the neighbourhood of London, it was the custom, not many years ago, to assemble in the public walks on a *Sunday evening*, when the public worship of the day was over. But *now*, the *morning* service is scarcely at an end, before Hyde Park is crowded like a race-course, and a sort of Vauxhall promenade is kept up all the afternoon, to the almost total desertion of our churches and chapels at both ends of the town. Surely these things ought not to be so in a Christian country, under circumstances so peculiarly awakening as our present are, and especially when we have before us, in a neighbouring kingdom, the baleful consequences of national apostacy from religious faith, religious practice, and religious principles.

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tion, but of gross debauchery. This evil sadly marks our age, in the verge of most great cities, and is daily productive of mischiefs not to be calculated. Now what pretence can there be for thus turning our backs upon God and his ordinances, and for making shipwreck of faith and conscience? Health is the only plausible pretext for this irreligious desertion. And this not only evinces itself to be a flimsy but also a false pretence; inasmuch as hundreds who are not ashamed to shun the temples of their God from the dread of catching cold, can yet brave the severest weather to mingle with their gay
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affociates, when *pleasure* and not *duty* leads the way. But admitting that health was the real motive which induced us to neglect the duties of the sabbath: is the health of the body to be attended to in exclusion of the health of the soul? Will such a pretence avail us at the tribunal of our Judge, when not only our own contempt of God's command shall appear against us, but when others with whose eternal good we trifled, shall unite in our condemnation, and charge their undoing upon our example? Was it so with the early professors of Christianity? Did they conceive themselves to fare the worse for a regular

regular attendance upon the worship of God? Did it appear to them that the enjoyment of health and life was incompatible with obedience to the divine will? Or did they not rather enjoy a fuller security in these respects, than we can do, where all is put to the hazard, from an ill-timed pursuit of pleasure in “ following the multitude to do evil?”

The ends for which the sabbath was originally instituted, and from which the command was from time to time renewed, were principally these: 1st, That men might continually commemorate the works of creation: 2dly, That the labourer and

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and the servant, and even the cattle, might have a time of rest: and, 3dly, That the Jews might commemorate their deliverance out of Egypt, which to that people was, as it were, a new creation. But then, instead of the Jewish sabbath, there succeeded by the appointment and practice of the apostles, the commemoration of our blessed Lord's resurrection: which coming to pass upon the first day of the week, the Christian sabbath was thenceforth kept on what we now call *Sunday*. One day in seven is thereby dedicated unto the Lord our God and Saviour, and set apart for the exercise of religious duties, both

both public and private. We must not only rest from the works of our calling, but our time must be employed in all such pious acts as tend to the glory of God, and the salvation of our own souls. We ought regularly to frequent the assemblies of public worship, not to talk or gaze about us, but to join in the prayers of the church, to hear the gospel expounded, to receive the holy sacrament when administered, and contribute to the relief of the poor, if there be any collection for their support, that we may thereby openly profess ourselves Christians, which is one great end of publicly “ assembling

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ourselves together." We ought in private to enlarge our ordinary devotions; to improve our religious knowledge by reading and meditating upon divine subjects; to instruct our children and families; to visit the sick and the poor, comforting them by seasonable assistance; and taking care that no founess or moroseness mingle with our serious frame of mind, in our conversation or intercourse with others. In short, every returning *Sunday* should be consecrated in a peculiar manner, by works of piety and works of charity, by a recollection of those blessings and comforts we have received from the

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bounty of Heaven, by humiliation, for our unworthiness, by thanksgiving for the unmerited mercies still extended to us, and by practising whatever tends to the real honour of God, or to the true interests of religion and virtue: always remembering, that, however diligent we may be in our earthly callings, there is no master to serve so good as God; and in the end, no work shall be so well rewarded as his service. By spending the Lord's day, moreover, in religious exercises, we acquire new power to perform God's will every day in the week.

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the follies of modern reformers, and pretenders to superior enlargement of mind, that they have endeavoured to destroy the sanctity, and, in course, the essential purposes of this sacred institution. They have laboured to render it a day of pleasurable diversion; and if they completely succeed, they will have made Sunday in no respect different from the other days of the week: for if one man be allowed to pursue pleasure at public places, another who feels the influence of avarice more than the love of pleasure, will justly claim a right to pursue his lucrative labour. And indeed, it must be owned that

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there would be far less evil in prosecuting the designs of honest industry, than in relaxing the nerves of the mind by a dissolute pursuit of such pleasures as usually terminate in immorality and ruin. The national spirit and strength must be impaired by national corruption. Every thing which promotes virtue is salutary to the mind, considered only as a bracing medicine. And the institution of a day, therefore, devoted to rest and reflection, after six days spent in labour or dissipation, is not only wise in a political and religious view, but highly agreeable to the nature of man. Was it not a commandment of the Almighty

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Almighty that we should “keep holy the sabbath-day?”

Now the sanctifying of the sabbath consists in two things: first, in resting from all common business pertaining to our natural life: secondly, in consecrating that rest wholly to the service of God. If then those recreations which are lawful at other times, are on the sabbath not allowed; much more should those be refrained from, which are at all times unlawful.

The interval between the morning and evening service of the church, may surely be spent in reading, or in improving conversation. The rest of the day, even

to eight o'clock, may, in the metropolis, be passed at church, if any one chooses it. And though there is no obligation to attend at more than the established times, yet no man can say there are no proper places of public resort, when he can scarcely pass through a street without seeing a church-door open, and hearing a bell inviting him to enter. The little time which remains after the usual duties of the day, may certainly be spent in such a manner as to cause no weariness. A cheerful walk amid rural scenes is capable of affording in fine weather a delightful pleasure. In all seasons, and at all hours, conversation

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versation may be made to furnish a refined delight; and such books may be procured as are able to exalt and improve the soul. He who questions the truth of this, must allow his hearers to question his claim to the title of a rational being. Any new-created want of public diversions or amusements must originate from the defect of a religious education, or from subsequent dissipation, which leaves no relish for the proper and natural methods of passing a Sunday, in the performance of religious duties, and the exertions of Christian charity. But when death and judgment are in view, we shall find that

that to have “ served the Lord in fear,” and to have “ rejoiced unto him with reverence,” will afford a satisfaction far beyond all the fleeting gratifications of this deluding world. We shall then freely acknowledge that “ a day passed in the courts of the Lord ” will yield more self-approbation than years devoted to thoughtless pleasure. We shall then gladly own, that to have been guided by Christian prudence, to have submitted to Christian discipline, to have joined ourselves heartily to God and his service, by a serious and regular observance of the *Christian sabbath*, will be of more avail than all the bland-

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A PRAYER FOR SUNDAY.

O Almighty and merciful God!
who in thy good providence hast
commanded the observation of the
sabbath for the benefit of man;
grant that we may ever improve
this gracious institution to promote
and set forward our salvation. May
every thing we hear, or read, or
pray for on this thy sacred day,
produce a good effect upon our
conduct every day of our lives;
that

that so, every revolving sabbath may make us better Christians as we advance in life, and render us fitter for our death as it brings us nearer to it. Let us never forget, O heavenly Father, it is thy will and commandment that we should "keep holy the sabbath-day," in thankful remembrance of the creation of the world, and of the redemption of mankind by the death of thy blessed Son. Let us esteem it our highest privilege and our truest happiness to have a day set apart for thy praise and service, and for serious attention to the concerns of our own souls. Help us to examine our hearts and lives,
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and to discover all that is amiss in them. If there be any duty which we neglect, or any iniquity which we continue to practise; if there be any evil habit to which we yield, or any unchristian temper against which we do not earnestly contend; if there be any inattention or indifference in the midst of our public worship, any neglect of secret prayer, or any dislike to serious piety, we pray that we may this day discover and correct it, through thine especial grace assisting us. Let it be our common aim, upon the stated returns of duty, to meet together in the house of God, as beings who have one grand interest

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depending, and in united prospect,
—an EVERLASTING SABBATH.
Pardon, O Lord, we beseech thee,
the sins of the past week: and let
not our manifold offences prevent
our prayers from ascending to thee,
or withhold the influence of thy
Holy Spirit from descending unto
us. Let not our hearts be like the
way-side, which through hardness
receiveth not the good seed*, till
the evil one cometh, and catcheth
it away; nor like the stony ground,
which receiveth it with joy for a
time, but as soon as persecution
arises, withereth it up; nor like

* Matthew, xiii. 19.

the thorny ground, which, by the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choketh the word, and maketh it altogether unfruitful; but grant, O Lord, that, like unto the good ground, we may receive thy holy word with honest and good hearts, and bring forth fruit with patience, in such measure as thy wisdom shall think meet for the attainment of our “exceeding great reward.” Strengthen us, O gracious Lord, for all our duties; save us from temptation and danger; comfort us whenever we come into trouble and adversity; guide us through this world by thy good providence;

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dence; and grant that we who here meet together to worship thee on earth, may meet, when this life is ended, to praise and to adore thee for ever and ever in heavenly blessedness, through the merits, and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

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CHAP. VIII.

ALTHOUGH we are called upon in a peculiar manner to the religious observation of every *seventh day*, yet ought some portion of *every day* to be dedicated to the service of our Maker, to implore his forgiveness of the past, to entreat his protection for the future, and to invoke his prosperous blessing on all our undertakings. Nor should stated periods of worship be our only communication with him; but we should accustom ourselves to think of him in all our waking hours, to contemplate

wisdom and power in the works of his hands, to acknowledge his goodness in every object of use or pleasure, to delight in giving him praise in the midst of every innocent gratification, in the liveliest hour of social enjoyment. Silent acts of gratitude and love will enhance every blessing, and diffuse a sweet serenity and cheerfulness over the mind ; for there is nothing so friendly to joy, so productive of true pleasure, so peculiarly suited to the innocence of a youthful heart, as devotional sensibility. Never, therefore, think it too soon to devote your thoughts to God, but offer him the first fruits
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of your understanding and affections; and be assured that the more you increase in love to him, and delight in his laws, the more you will increase in happiness, in excellence, and honour; that, in proportion as you improve in true religion, you will become dear and amiable to your fellow-creatures, contented and peaceful in yourself, and qualified to enjoy the best blessings of this life, as well as to inherit the glorious promise of immortality.

Now the first principles of all religion are, belief in God, worthy notions of his attributes, and suitable affections towards him,

which will naturally excite a sincere desire of obedience. But before we can obey his will, we must know *what* that will is; we must inquire in *what* manner he has declared it, and *where* we may find those laws which must be the rule of our actions.

The great laws of morality are indeed written in our hearts, and may be discovered by reason; but our reason is of slow growth, very unequally dispensed to different persons, and confined within very narrow limits in all. God has therefore vouchsafed to grant a particular revelation of his will; he has been so unspeakably gracious

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cious as to send his Son into the world to reclaim us from error and wickedness, to die for our sins, and to teach us the way to eternal life. The holy scriptures are writings inspired by God, containing a true history of facts; a true recital of the laws given by God to Moses, and of the precepts of our blessed Lord and Saviour, delivered from his own mouth to his disciples, and repeated and enlarged upon in the Epistles of his apostles, who, after his ascension, were assisted and inspired by the Holy Ghost. Our BIBLE, therefore, must be made the *rule of life*. It must be
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our chief study and delight. It must be read, not as a task, or as the dull employment of that day only on which we are forbidden more lively entertainments, but with a sincere and ardent desire of instruction; with that delight which the holy Psalmist so forcibly felt, and which is the natural consequence of loving God and virtue. Every part of the sacred volume cannot, of course, be equally interesting. It consists of various matter, and various kinds of books, which must be read with different views and sentiments. The manner in which children usually read the Bible, is

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very ill calculated to make them really acquainted with it; and too many people who have read it thus in their youth, persuade themselves that they know enough of it, and never afterwards study it with attention when they come to a maturer age. Indeed, one great and radical defect in education is, that religion is rather taught incidentally, as a matter of inferior consequence, than as the first object of human study, the leading principle of human actions, and the great animating spring of human conduct. The holy scriptures are not regarded as a divine treasury of knowledge, which
contains

contains instruction of inestimable value, and of infinite importance.

Some short sketches of the matter comprised in the different books of the BIBLE may give a general notion of what is to be expected from each, and heighten the relish for reading them, by helping us to comprehend their purport.

The first book, *Genesis*, contains the most grand, and, to us, the most interesting events that ever happened in the universe: the creation of the world and of man; the deplorable fall of man, from his first state of innocence and bliss, to the distressed condition

dition in which his descendants continue; the sentence of death pronounced upon Adam and all his race, with the reviving promise of that deliverance which has since been wrought for us by Jesus Christ; the account of the early state of the world; of the universal deluge; the division of mankind into different nations and languages; the story of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people, whose unshaken faith and obedience obtained such favour in the sight of God, that he promised to make of his posterity a great nation, and that in his seed (that is, in one of his descendants) all the king-

kingdoms of the earth should be blessed: this, it will be easily seen, refers to the Messiah, who was to be the blessing and deliverance of all nations. This book proceeds with the history of Isaac, which becomes very interesting to us if we consider him as the type of our Saviour; it recounts his marriage with Rebecca; the birth and history of his two sons, Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, and Esau, the father of the Edomites or Idumeans; the exquisitely affecting story of Joseph and his brethren, and of his transplanting the Israelites into Egypt, who

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In *Exodus*, we read of a series of wonders wrought by the Almighty to rescue the oppressed Israelites from the cruel tyranny of the Egyptians, who, having first received them as guests, by degrees reduced them to a state of slavery. By the most peculiar mercies exerted in their favour, God prepared his chosen people to receive, with reverent and obedient hearts, the awful revelation of his eternal law; impressing it on their minds with circumstances of terror, "with blackness, and darkness, and tempest," but with-

out those encouragements and promises which were afterwards offered to mankind in the revelation of the gospel. To those great laws of morality, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, many peculiar institutions were superadded by the ministration of Moses, wisely adapted to different ends; either to fix the memory of those past deliverances which were figurative of a future and far greater salvation; to place inviolable barriers between the Jews and the idolatrous nations by whom they were surrounded; or to be the civil law by which the community was to be governed.

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The next book is *Leviticus*, which contains little besides the laws for the ritual observance of the Jews, and therefore affords no great instruction to us now. For this reason we may pass it over entirely; and, for the same reason, the first eight chapters of *Numbers*. The rest of *Numbers* is chiefly a continuation of the history, with some ritual laws.

In *Deuteronomy*, Moses recapitulates the foregoing history, and zealously exhorts the people to worship and obey that God who had worked such amazing wonders for them: he promises the noblest temporal blessings if they

prove obedient, and adds the most awful denunciations if they rebel, or forsake the true God. But here it must be observed, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were *temporal* rewards and punishments; those of the New Testament are *eternal*. Moses, in this book, directs the method in which the Israelites were to deal with the seven nations whom they were appointed to punish for their profligacy and idolatry. He gives them excellent laws, civil as well as religious: and this book concludes with Moses's song and death.

The book of *Joshua* contains the conquests of the Israelites over
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the seven nations, and their establishment in the promised land. For the sake of righteous Abraham their founder, and perhaps for other wise reasons undiscovered to us; they were selected from a world over-run with idolatry, to preserve upon earth the pure worship of the only true God, and to be honoured with the birth of the Messiah amongst them. For this end they were precluded by divine command from mixing with any other people, and defended by a great number of peculiar rites and observances from falling into the corrupt worship practised by their neighbours.

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The book of *Judges*, in which are the affecting stories of Samson and Jephtha, carries on the history from the death of Joshua, about two hundred and fifty years; but the facts are not told in the times in which they happened, which makes some confusion; and it is necessary to consult the marginal dates and notes, as well as the index, in order to get any clear idea of the succession of events during that period.

The history then proceeds regularly through the two books of *Samuel*, and those of *Kings*. Nothing can be more interesting than the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon;

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Solomon; but after the death of Solomon, when ten tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam, and became a separate kingdom, it is difficult to understand distinctly the histories of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which are blended together, and by the likeness of names will be apt to confound, without great attention to the index. The second book of Kings concludes with the Babylonish captivity, five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ; till which time the kingdom of Judah had descended in the line of David.

The first book of *Chronicles* begins

gins with a genealogy from Adam through all the tribes of Israel and Judah ; and the remainder is the same history which is contained in the book of Kings, with little variation till the separation of the ten tribes. From that period it proceeds with the history of the kingdom of Judah alone, and gives, therefore, a more regular and clear account of it than is contained in the book of Kings. The second of Chronicles ends, like the second of Kings, with the Babylonish captivity.

In the book of *Ezra* the history is pursued, which gives an account of the return of some of
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the Jews, on the edict of Cyrus, and of the rebuilding the Lord's temple.

Nehemiah carries on the history for about twelve years, when he himself was governor of Jerusalem.

The story of *Esther* is prior in time to that of Ezra and Nehemiah, as may be seen by the marginal dates; however, as it happened during the seventy years captivity, and is a kind of incidental narrative, it may be read in its own place. This is the last of the canonical books that is properly historical; but in the apocryphal

cryphal books the history is continued.

It is uncertain by whom the story of *Job* was written : many parts of it are obscure ; but it is well worth studying for its extreme beauty, and for the sublime devotion it contains.

Next follow *The Psalms*, with which we cannot be too conversant. If we have any taste either for true piety or fine writing, they will afford a continual delight. Never did the spirit of devotion breathe more strongly than in these divine songs ; which being added to a rich vein of poetry, makes them captivating to the heart

heart and imagination. There are many very striking prophecies of the Messiah, scattered up and down the Psalms, and, indeed, throughout the Old Testament. To bear testimony to *his* coming, appears to be the great and ultimate end for which the gift of prophecy was bestowed on the sacred writers.

The *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* are rich stores of wisdom, from which we may adopt such maxims as may be of infinite use, both to our temporal and eternal interest.

The *Song of Solomon* is a fine poetical composition; but its mystical

tical reference to religion lies too deep for a common understanding.

Next follow the *Prophecies*, which are highly deserving the greatest attention and study, as one of the main proofs of our religion rests on their testimony; but as they may be difficult to understand without assistance, it is better to read them with a good exposition.

The first book of the *Maccabees*, in the Apocrypha, pursues the thread of the history from Nehemiah, and carries it on till within one hundred and ninety-five years of our Saviour's nativity! The second book is the same narrative, written

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written by a different hand, and does not bring the history so forward as the first. The other books of the Apocrypha, though not admitted as of sacred authority, have many things well worthy attention, particularly in *Ecclesiasticus* and the *Book of Wisdom*.

We come now to that part of scripture which is the most important of all, *the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST*, who was the messenger of peace to guilty man.

The four Gospels of St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, are each of them a narrative of the life, doctrines, and death, of our
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life and immortality to light:" the third, to sacrifice himself for us; to obtain by his death the remission of our sins upon our repentance and reformation, and the power of bestowing on his sincere followers the inestimable gift of immortal happiness.

Though the four Gospels are each of them a narration of the life and death of Christ, yet they are not exactly alike, since some circumstances and sayings omitted in one, are recorded in another.

The *Acts* of the holy Apostles, endowed with the Holy Ghost, and authorized by their Divine Master, come next in order. No-

thing can be more interesting and edifying than the history of their actions, of the piety, zeal, and courage, with which they preached the glad tidings of salvation. The character of St. Paul, and his miraculous conversion, demand particular attention. He was a chosen vessel to promote the honour of God, and the cause of true religion.

The *Epistles* make a very important part of the New Testament, and cannot be too much read: they contain the most excellent precepts and admonitions, and are of particular use in explaining more at large several doctrines of Christianity,

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trianity, which we could not fully comprehend without them.

The Epistle of St. *James* is entirely practical, and exceedingly fine. It seems particularly designed to guard Christians against misunderstanding some things in St. Paul's writings, which have been perverted to a dependance on faith alone, without good works.

The Epistles of St. *Peter* are also full of the best instructions concerning the relative duties of life, among which are, especially, set forth the duties of wives and husbands, of masters and servants.

The first of St. *John* is written in a highly figurative style, which

makes it in some parts hard to be understood; but that love of God and of man, which this beloved apostle so fervently recommends, is, in truth, the essence of the Christian religion, as our Saviour himself informs us.

The book of *Revelation* contains a prophetical account of most of the great events relating to the Christian church, which were to happen from the time of the writer, St. John, to the end of the world. The best expositions are necessary to assist us in reading this, and some other parts of holy writ, that we may properly understand them,

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The Bible, for its genuine and superior excellence above all other books, is called THE SCRIPTURES. These scriptures were written for our information; and though in familiar parables, similitudes, and allegories, our great Master has enforced the doctrines of our salvation, yet they contain several points too abstruse for a clear judgment to be formed concerning them. Whatever is necessary for us to know, and believe, and practise, in order to salvation, is clearly displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those points in it that are not fundamental are so termed because the perception of them

them is not so obvious to all men ; nor are they in the same degree of necessity to be believed by all men. The moral efficacy of the gospel does not seem to depend upon any of those mysterious points which human reason cannot fathom, but upon the certainty of a future state, and upon a belief that the rules which the gospel exhibits for our conduct are the written will of God. The whole must, therefore, be read with the greatest reverence, candour, and caution ; and where there is a diversity of opinion about any text, it is our duty to regulate our faith rather by what God has delivered, than by

by what man has defined. Christianity by no means proposes to mankind a theological code involved in no perplexities, since its great mysterious truths cannot be solved by the light of nature, nor by the boldest flights of philosophy. But this circumstance by no means implies impossibility or contradiction in the thing itself. It arises from the limited nature of the human faculties; and these mysteries appear to be wisely shaded from our view, the better to excite in us the ardour of faith, and exercise the virtues necessary to obtain the sublime rewards which are offered to persevering piety.

piety. He is not a Christian, whatever he may suppose, who explains away the most essential doctrines of Christianity, because to his intellect they are unintelligible. Nor does he merit the title of a rational being, who either rejects whatever he cannot understand, or by the assistance of art and sophistry, accounts, in his own imagination, for what is confessedly mysterious. The holy gospel is not founded on the wisdom of man, but on the wisdom of God. There are many things in it *above* reason; and he who is determined at all events to bring them to the test of reason, may

may indeed be a subtle logician, but he is not a proficient in the school of Christ. The best lesson such a person can learn is *humility*.

Religion alone can perfect what reason begins. All our laboured books, and all our boasted wisdom or philosophy, are but trifles and shadows, compared to the influence of that grace which the Giver of all goodness vouchsafes to the pious and devout believer. The *Bible* alone contains the oracles of God, the sacred records of divine truth. Whoever retains a due reverence for this invaluable book, and makes it his study and meditation, will continue

tinue grounded and settled in the faith, and will not be diverted from the hopes of the gospel; for to all that are sincere lovers of the truth, the careful perusal of the holy scriptures will afford so many arguments of their divine authority, as cannot be withstood by any ingenuous and unvitiated mind. Nor are they to be regarded only as a treatise of moral duties, but as a series of divine revelations to teach us the way to *eternal life* through *faith in Christ*; or, as St. Paul expresses it, the scripture is to make us wise unto salvation through *faith*; that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Son of God; and that, believing,

believing, we might have life through his name. Now the things declared to be the terms and condition of salvation, are repentance from all evil works, the belief of a resurrection from the dead, and of a judgment to come, with a suitable obedience to our Lord's commands in the gospel, and faith in the mercies of God, through the death, merits, and intercession of Christ Jesus our Saviour.

A PRAYER.

Blessed Lord! who hast caused
thy holy scriptures to be written
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for our instruction, grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. We bless and praise thine holy name, O Lord, for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; for our health and strength, our food and raiment, our friends and benefactors; but, above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace here, and
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for the hope of glory hereafter. And we beseech thee to give us that due and deep-felt sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts and souls may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves more and more to thy sacred service. Assist us, O Lord, with thy spiritual grace, that we may perceive the end and scope of thy holy scriptures, and reverence them as thy revealed will, as containing the best rule of life, the clearest declaration of thy laws, the only assurance of pardon to true peni-

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tents,

tents, and of eternal happiness to all virtuous believers, through the Saviour and Deliverer of the world! Teach us to apply this knowledge to our present and future advantage. When we read of thy judgments, may we stand in awe of thy power; and when we are comforted with thy promises and mercies, may our hearts be filled with gratitude and praise. Let thy Holy Spirit assist us to subdue our irregular desires, to aid our repentance, to strengthen our faith, to quicken our obedience, and to keep us steadfast in every good resolution that we have secretly

cretly formed. Enable us constantly to live in a daily preparation to die, that we may employ the remainder of our lives to thy glory, and the salvation of our own souls; and having done thy will, and enjoyed thy favour here, we may at length be received into those everlasting habitations which are prepared for those faithful followers who are found worthy “to enter into the joy of their Lord.” These prayers, O heavenly Father! we offer unto thy divine majesty in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour; to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit,

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Spirit, be ascribed, as is most
due, all thanksgiving and praise,
honour, glory, power, worship,
and dominion, both now and ever-
more. Amen.



A HYMN.

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A HYMN.

GOD of my life! through all its days
My grateful heart shall sound thy praise;
My song shall wake with opening light,
And chase the dark and silent night.

When anxious cares would break my rest,
And grief would rend my throbbing breast,
Thy tuneful praises, rais'd on high,
Shall check the murmur and the sigh.

When death o'er nature shall prevail,
And all the powers of language fail,
Joy through my heav'n-rais'd eyes shall break,
And *look* the thanks I cannot *speak*.

But, oh! when that last conflict's o'er,
And I am chain'd to earth no more,
With what glad accents shall I rise
To join the music of the skies!

ON LOVE TO MANKIND.

O God! my Saviour and my King,
Of all I have, or hope, the Spring!
Send down thy Spirit from above,
And warm my heart with holy love.

With pity let my heart o'erflow,
When I behold a brother's woe,
And bear a sympathizing part
With all who are of heavy heart.

And when a neighbour's prosp'rous state
Shall joy within himself create,
Let me too in his triumph join,
And count his peace and pleasure mine.

Let love in all my conduct shine,
An image fair, though faint, of thine!
Let me thy humble follower prove,
Father of men! great God of love!

ON THE SABBATH.

LORD of the Sabbath ! hear our vows,
On this thy day, in this thy house :
Accept, as grateful sacrifice,
The songs which from thy temple rise.

Thine earthly sabbaths, LORD, we love ;
But there's a nobler rest above :
To that our longing souls aspire
With cheerful hope and strong desire.

No more fatigue, no more distress,
Nor sin, nor death, shall reach the place ;
No groans shall mingle with the songs
Which dwell upon immortal tongues.

No rude alarms of angry foes,
No cares shall break the long repose ;
No midnight shade, no clouded sun,
But sacred, high, eternal noon.

O, long-expected day ! begin,
Dawn on these realms of grief and sin ;
With hope we'll tread the destin'd road,
And sleep in death, to wake with God.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

OBSERVE, my soul, the narrow bounds
Of the revolving year;
How swift the weeks complete their rounds,
How short the months appear!

Much of my fleeting life is gone,
Nor will return again;
And swift my passing moments run,
The few which yet remain.

So fast *eternity* comes on,
And that tremendous day,
When all that mortal life has done,
God's judgment will survey.

Awake, my soul, with earnest care
Thy true condition learn;
What are thy hopes, what is thy fear,
And what thy chief concern?

Devoutly yield thyself to God,
And on his care depend;
With zeal pursue the heav'nly road,
Nor doubt a happy end.

THE VANITY OF LIFE.

SEE the leaves around us falling,
Dry and wither'd to the ground;
Thus to thoughtless mortals calling,
With a sad and solemn sound :

“ Sons of Adam, once in Eden,
Blighted when like us you fell,
Hear the lecture we are reading,
'T is, alas ! the truth we tell.

“ Maidens, much, too much, presuming
On your boasted white and red,
View us, late in beauty blooming,
Number'd now amongst the dead.

“ Youths, though yet no losses grieve you,
Gay in health and manly grace,
Let no cloudless skies deceive you :
Summer gives to autumn place.

“ Venerable fires, grown hoary,
Hither turn th' unwilling eye ;
Think, amid your falling glory,
Autumn tells a winter nigh.

“ Yearly

236 THE IMPORTANCE, &c.

“ Yearly in our course returning,
Messengers of shortest stay ;
Thus we preach this truth concerning,
‘ Heav’n and earth shall pass away.’

“ On the tree of life eternal,
Man, let all thy hopes be stay’d,
Which alone for ever vernal,
Bears a leaf that ne’er shall fade !”

THE END.





